

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS YEREVAN 001088

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/CACEN; DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM PGOV AM

SUBJECT: ARMENIAN OPPOSITION HALTS PROTESTS, AWAITS
GOAM RESPONSE TO PACE

1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

SUMMARY

2. (SBU) The Armenian opposition announced a 10-day suspension in its protests against the presidency of Robert Kocharian to give the government time to comply with PACE Resolution 1374. Opposition leaders announced the suspension to a crowd of nearly 5,000 during a protest in central Yerevan, May 4. After the rally, protesters marched by the Armenian National Security Service and police headquarters to protest the government practice of using "administrative detention" against opposition supporters. The protest ended peacefully, but Post has unconfirmed reports of additional detentions. End Summary.

REACTION TO PACE

3. (SBU) In their comments to the crowd, the leaders of the Justice Alliance and the National Unity Party (AMK) frequently referred to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) resolution of last week, which denounced the GOAM crackdown on opposition activities. The speakers called on the GOAM to comply with the resolution, specifically by releasing those in administrative detention and by ensuring freedom of assembly and expression. Many of the more active protesters carried European Union flags. Albert Bazheyan of the Justice Alliance claimed "those [EU] demands are also the opposition demands." The opposition announced the 10-day suspension of protests in order to give the government time to comply with the PACE resolution.

MARCH AND REACTION

4. (SBU) After the 90-minute rally, many of the demonstrators marched past the National Security Service and the central police station. Post has no reports of violence during the march. Protesters had been warned by the GOAM not to march down Baghramian Avenue toward the National Assembly and the Presidential Palace. The government stationed water cannons, troops and police along Baghramian, but the protesters followed their previously announced route past law enforcement agencies

5. (SBU) Opposition parties have not yet confirmed reports of 14 additional administrative detentions after the rally. The number detained, if accurate, is significantly smaller than the thirty to forty people detained after each of last month's rallies.

COMMENT

6. (SBU) The government made no official comment on the opposition's demands, but instead has emphasized that the PACE resolution did not endorse a presidential referendum. Since the opposition and GOAM have few points of contact to facilitate negotiation and because both sides claim victory in PACE Resolution 1374, Post sees little chance for compromise in the short term and as yet has seen no indication that the GOAM has changed its position since the PACE resolution.
ORDWAY